

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 911

JC 810 342

AUTHOR Klinman, Debra G.
TITLE Employer Needs Assessment Project: Final Report.
INSTITUTION Mercer County Community Coll., Trenton, N.J.
PUB DATE May 81
NOTE 75p.: Appendices C and D contained copyrighted material and are therefore not available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges: Educational Quality: *Employer Attitudes: *Employment Practices: Employment Projections: Employment Qualifications: Informal Assessment: Labor Needs: *Needs Assessment: Personnel Evaluation: Recruitment: School Business Relationship: Surveys: Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

In the summer and spring of 1980 Mercer County Community College undertook a large-scale employer needs assessment project, during which 1,140 Mercer County employers were contacted in order to: (1) assess employers' practices and preferences in the recruitment of personnel; (2) determine employer satisfaction with the College's ability to educate students for meaningful employment; (3) analyze current and future manpower demands; (4) assess employer needs and attitudes in relation to providing their employees with additional skill training; and (5) strengthen the College's relationship with the community by encouraging productive two-way communication. Selected findings, based on responses from 37% of the employers surveyed, indicate that employers consistently ranked occupational skills and experience, a sense of personal responsibility, and willingness to work and learn as the three most important criteria for employee recruitment; and that at least 85% of the employers felt Mercer graduates possessed this sense of responsibility and willingness to work and learn. The study report provides an executive summary of the purposes, findings, and benefits of the project; a detailed description of study methodology; survey results; and summary recommendations. The questionnaire and an explanation of the coding formats used for data analysis are appended. (AYC)

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EMPLOYER NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT
MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FINAL REPORT

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Office of Institutional Research
Mercer County Community College

Trenton, New Jersey

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this Project required the cooperation and assistance of many people. Their contributions--individual and collective--are sincerely acknowledged.

Members of the Project Advisory Committee were:

- D. Banks, Director, MCCC Placement Services
- N. Cernero, Coordinator, MCCC Management Training Center
- S. Z. Hanson, Chairperson, MCCC Division of Math & Engineering
- E. Madill, Former Director, MCCC Training Services
- T. Mennuti, Director, MCCC Community Development Services
- T. McGough, Sr. Planner, Trenton C.E.T.A. Administration
- R. Nini, Executive Director, MCCC Center of External Programs and Services

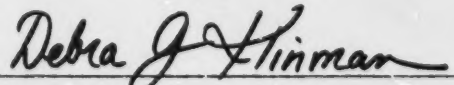
The project was sponsored and/or endorsed by the following organizations:

- Trenton/Mercer County Private Industry Council
- Hightstown-East Windsor Chamber of Commerce
- Mercer County Chamber of Commerce
- Princeton Chamber of Commerce

The "nuts and bolts" of conducting this Project would have been overwhelming without the supportive assistance of the following members of the MCCC Office of Institutional Research:

- T. Collins, Director
- C. Arneth, Secretary
- R. Wolf, Research Aide

Finally, thanks are extended to each and every member of the Mercer County employment community who participated in this Project, thereby enabling the College to better understand and respond to their needs.



Debra G. Klinman, PhD
Project Director

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose and Objectives of the Employer Needs Assessment Project

Mercer County Community College is committed to providing its constituents--students, employers, and the community as a whole--with high quality educational programs and services. Accordingly, the College's statement of mission includes the following goal:

To ensure the maintenance of effective relationships with local institutions, agencies, and organizations and enable students to acquire productive and marketable skills, knowledge, competencies, and attitudes necessary for useful and productive lives in the community and society.

Consistent with this goal, the College undertook a large scale Employer Needs Assessment Project, contacting 1,140 Mercer County Employers during the spring and summer of 1980.¹

The overriding purpose of the Project was to determine the present and future personnel and training needs of Mercer County businesses, industries, and governmental units. More specifically, the following five objectives were defined:

- #1. *To assess employers' practices and preferences in the recruitment of personnel;*
- #2. *To determine employer satisfaction with the College's ability to educate students for meaningful employment;*
- #3. *To analyze current and future manpower demands as perceived by the local employment community;*
- #4. *To assess employer needs and attitudes in relation to providing their employees with additional skill training;*
- #5. *To strengthen the College-community relationship in general by encouraging productive two-way communication.*

1. Responses were received from a gratifying 37% of all contacted Mercer County employers. The College gratefully acknowledges the role played by the following organizations in helping to achieve this high rate of employer response: Mercer County-Trenton Private Industry Council, Mercer County Chamber of Commerce, Hightstown-East Windsor Chamber of Commerce, Princeton Chamber of Commerce.

Major Findings

Recruitment Practices and Preferences

- Mercer County employers consistently rank three traits as most important when recruiting new employees:
 - (1) occupational/technical skills and experience;
 - (2) a sense of personal responsibility; and
 - (3) the willingness to work and learn.
- The above-listed preferences hold true among all employers regardless of the level of the position they are trying to fill (i.e., professional or non-professional).
- Most local employers regularly use the following recruitment sources:
 - (1) newspaper advertisements;
 - (2) private employment agencies;
 - (3) the New Jersey State Employment Office.

Satisfaction with MCCC-Educated Employees

- At least 85% of all employers express satisfaction with their Mercer-educated employees in the following areas:
 - (1) the ability to get along with co-workers;
 - (2) the willingness to work and learn;
 - (3) basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics);
 - (4) appearance and personality; and
 - (5) a sense of personal responsibility.

Current and Future Manpower Needs

- Hard-to-fill entry level jobs predominantly involve clerical and sales personnel. Employers present the following reasons for their difficulty in filling entry-level positions:
 - (1) an inadequate supply of applicants;
 - (2) the lack of job skills among available applicants;
 - (3) the lack of personal responsibility among applicants;
 - (4) applicants with little or no work experience;
 - (5) low wages and/or irregular work schedules.
- Employers' projections for new or additional jobs--primarily at the professional/technical/managerial level--far exceed their projections for job loss throughout Mercer County, except among very large employers (i.e., organizations which employ at least 200 people).

Training Needs

- Most local employers rely on internal resources--department heads or supervisors--to upgrade or develop new employee skills. When outside training expertise is sought, employers turn to:
 - (1) professional associations;
 - (2) schools or training agencies; and
 - (3) consultants.
- Popular incentives to employees who pursue additional skill training include:
 - (1) tuition assistance; and
 - (2) possible subsequent promotions.
- Overall, employer awareness of MCCC's employee training capabilities is moderate. Nonetheless, a substantial group of employers express definite interest in obtaining such services from the College. Training priorities are as follows:
 - (1) management skills;
 - (2) technical skills;
 - (3) human resources skills;
 - (4) communication skills; and
 - (5) entry-level skills training.

Benefits of the Project

Mercer County Community College has gained a great deal from the conduct of its Employer Needs Assessment Project. Having contacted its local employment community directly, and having received valuable first-hand information concerning county-wide personnel and training needs, the College is now in a better position to satisfy these needs. Major findings of the Project have been translated into a comprehensive set of recommendations designed to help improve Mercer's educational programs and services in two important directions: services to students (e.g., career counseling, program refinement, employment skills in the affective domain) and services to employers (e.g., improved personnel placement and employee training services). Perhaps most importantly, the Employer Needs Assessment Project has stimulated an ongoing two-way interchange between the College and a major segment of the community which it was established to serve.

METHOD

Overview

The Employer Needs Assessment Project was designed as a survey research effort. Several methodological tasks were involved, including the development and production of a survey instrument, combining open-ended and forced-choice items as appropriate; the identification of a comprehensive sample of Mercer County employers who would be asked to complete the survey instrument; the actual process of data collection, including the mailing of surveys, the tracking of response rates, and a follow-up of non-respondents; the development and application of coding schemes for both open-ended and forced-choice survey items and the subsequent preparation of all raw data for statistical analysis; the development of a scheme to classify responding organizations into meaningful sub-groups by the size of their employee population and the type of major product or service they produce; and, finally, the performance of appropriate statistical analyses for the sample as a whole as well as for identified sub-groups. Each of these methodological tasks is described in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

Survey Development

Development of an appropriate survey instrument was a crucial first step in implementing the Employer Needs Assessment Project. Three interactive processes were involved: a) defining a manageable number of focal research questions and translating these questions into measurable variables (i.e., survey items); b) conducting a review of relevant literature to identify the methods and outcomes of similar research efforts; and c) involving key resource personnel in all phases of survey development, thereby ensuring the meaningfulness and utility of the data to be obtained.

An Advisory Committee was formed at the inception of the Project. Members included key College personnel in several areas of responsibility: Student Placement, External Agency and Management Training, Community Development, Institutional Research, the Division of Academic Affairs, and the Office of the President. Also included were local CETA representatives. Members of this Advisory Committee reacted to and revised the specific

information-seeking content of each survey item, and also worked to refine the survey's format, language, and overall appearance.

Based on input from this Advisory Committee, and the published findings of similar research, a first draft of the survey instrument was developed. Major variables included the following:

1. organizational descriptors (name, location, major product or service, respondent's title);
2. current employee recruitment practices (most desired qualities in employees, frequently used recruitment sources);
3. job positions available (entry-level positions, new positions as a result of projected expansion, projected loss of current positions);
4. satisfaction with local educational and training agencies (Mercer County Community College, CETA);
5. current employee training practices (ongoing training programs, incentives to employees, unmet training needs); and
6. perceptions of Mercer County Community College as a potential resource for employee skill training (awareness of MCCC's training capabilities, interest in obtaining information or services).

The instrument underwent two major revisions--one primarily for content, the second for format--prior to being typeset and printed. Every effort was made to encourage wide-scale employer response by producing an attractive, professional-looking, and easy-to-complete instrument. To this end, the survey contained a mixture of item types: close-ended questions with an array of pre-selected response options, open-ended items inviting unstructured employer responses, and items which combined these two methods of question-asking. A copy of the survey in its final form is presented in Appendix A of this report.

Selection of Employer Sample

Two primary sources were combined in identifying the members of the county-wide employer population who would be asked to complete a survey form: the 1980 revision of the Mercer County Industrial Directory, compiled by the Mercer County Office of Economic Development, and a data tape maintained by the New Jersey State Department of Labor and Industry for fiscal purposes.

Each source had its advantages and difficulties. The county listing, while somewhat limited in scope (a total of 438 manufacturing, industrial, and wholesale companies) was newly updated and included the names of administrative-level contact persons. The state data tape, while more comprehensive in scope (a total of 2,765 records, including duplications) presented a variety of procedural problems: records indicated fiscal reporting addresses and fiscal contact persons rather than site addresses or administrative personnel, and they were stored on tape in a format that required a good deal of re-programming in order to be accessed.

Therefore, a decision was made to use the county listing--with 56 selected additions (e.g., local school boards, health care agencies, and institutions of higher education) as a primary source for identifying local employers ($N = 494$). Given the problematic format of the state maintained data tape, several criteria were developed for reviewing its contents and selecting those entries which would most effectively supplement the Mercer County Industrial Directory. Employers were selected and contacted only if they met these criteria: they had in-county mailing addresses, employed at least 5 people, were considered likely employers of Mercer students or graduates, and did not represent duplications of the county listing. In all, the state listing was used as a source for identifying 646 local employers; added together, all sources provided the College with a potential sample of 1,140 local employers.

Data Collection

All of the 1,140 local employers who were identified as potential survey recipients were contacted by mail during the months of April and May, 1980. Each employer received a copy of the Mercer County Community College Employer Needs Survey, and a cover letter requesting cooperation in the survey effort. In June, all non-respondents received a second copy of the survey and a follow-up request for participation.

Perhaps as an indication of the involvement and interest which characterizes Mercer's relationship with its local community, more than one out of every three employers who were contacted responded promptly and thoughtfully. A total of 421 completed surveys--representing a full 37% of the identified employment community--were submitted to the College for summary analysis.

Data Analysis

Data Coding

The survey contained a total of 19 items (see Appendix A). Three items (organization name, address, phone number) were strictly descriptive in nature and required no statistical analysis. This information will be used as a data base to facilitate continued contact between the College and responding employers. One item (#19) was entirely open-ended in nature, inviting employers' comments, ideas, suggestions, and so forth. Nine items (#4, #5, #6, #7, #9, #14, #15, #16, #18) presented the respondent with an array of pre-selected, close-ended response options. The remaining 6 items (#9, #10, #11, #12, #13, #17) were some combination of pre-selected options in conjunction with open-ended response opportunities.

Data were coded and keypunched in two steps. First, all close-ended data (a total of 95 response options embedded within 14 items) were coded and prepared for machine analysis. (See Appendix B for a description of the coding format used.)

Next, appropriate coding schemes were developed in order to systematically quantify employers' responses to open-ended survey items. Three items (#9, #10, #11) asked that employers specify job titles as precisely as possible. These responses were coded by referencing appropriate 3-digit codes from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (4th Edition, 1979). These codes were then collapsed into 13 categories for summary purposes (see Appendix C). Finally, a 2-digit scheme was developed for quantifying the affect as well as the substantive content of each additional open-ended response item (see Appendix B).

Classification of Respondents

Organization Size. Respondents were classified in two ways prior to further analysis: by organization size (i.e., total number of people employed) and by organization type (i.e., principal product or service produced). Since size and type descriptors were reported by official sources (the county or state) rather than by the organizations themselves, these data can be assumed to be free of self-report bias.

A preliminary inspection of the distribution of data describing organization size indicated that the respondent sample reflected the pyramidal structure of the county-wide employer population as a whole. That is, the

majority of the respondents were representing relatively small organizations (the "base" of the employment pyramid); a smaller, but still substantial group of respondents were representing mid-size organizations; and the smallest proportion of all respondents were representing large-scale organizations (the "tip" of the employment pyramid). Accordingly, three size categories were developed for further analysis. These were:

1. *small organizations*, with 25 or fewer employees ($\underline{n} = 242$)
2. *mid-size organizations*, with 26 to 199 employees ($\underline{n} = 114$)
3. *large organizations*, with 200 or more employees ($\underline{n} = 44$).

Figure 1 is a bar graph representation of the distribution of all responding organizations according to their size category.

Organization Type. Using the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Business Code Numbers as a schematic basis, respondents were further classified according to their principal product or service. Following a preliminary examination of the distribution of all SIC data, a total of seven major categories were developed to describe all respondents according to the type of organization they represented.

In order of their relative frequency within the responding sample as a whole, the categories for organization types were as follows:

1. *transportation, communication, and utilities* ($\underline{n} = 7$);
2. *agriculture, forestry, and fisheries* ($\underline{n} = 9$);
3. *contract construction* ($\underline{n} = 13$);
4. *finance, insurance, and real estate* ($\underline{n} = 36$)
5. *wholesale and retail trade* ($\underline{n} = 43$)
6. *manufacturers* ($\underline{n} = 127$); and
7. *service organizations* (including departments of state government ($\underline{n} = 186$)).

Figure 2 shows a graphic representation of the distribution of respondents according to their major product or service.

Crosstabulation by Size and Type. Finally, to help describe the relationship between the classification of organizations by size as well as by type, a crosstabulation was prepared (see Table 1). The results of this analysis make it possible to describe the predominant size categories within each of the seven major organization types. For example, the large majority of all employers in the areas of agriculture, construction, trades, and services

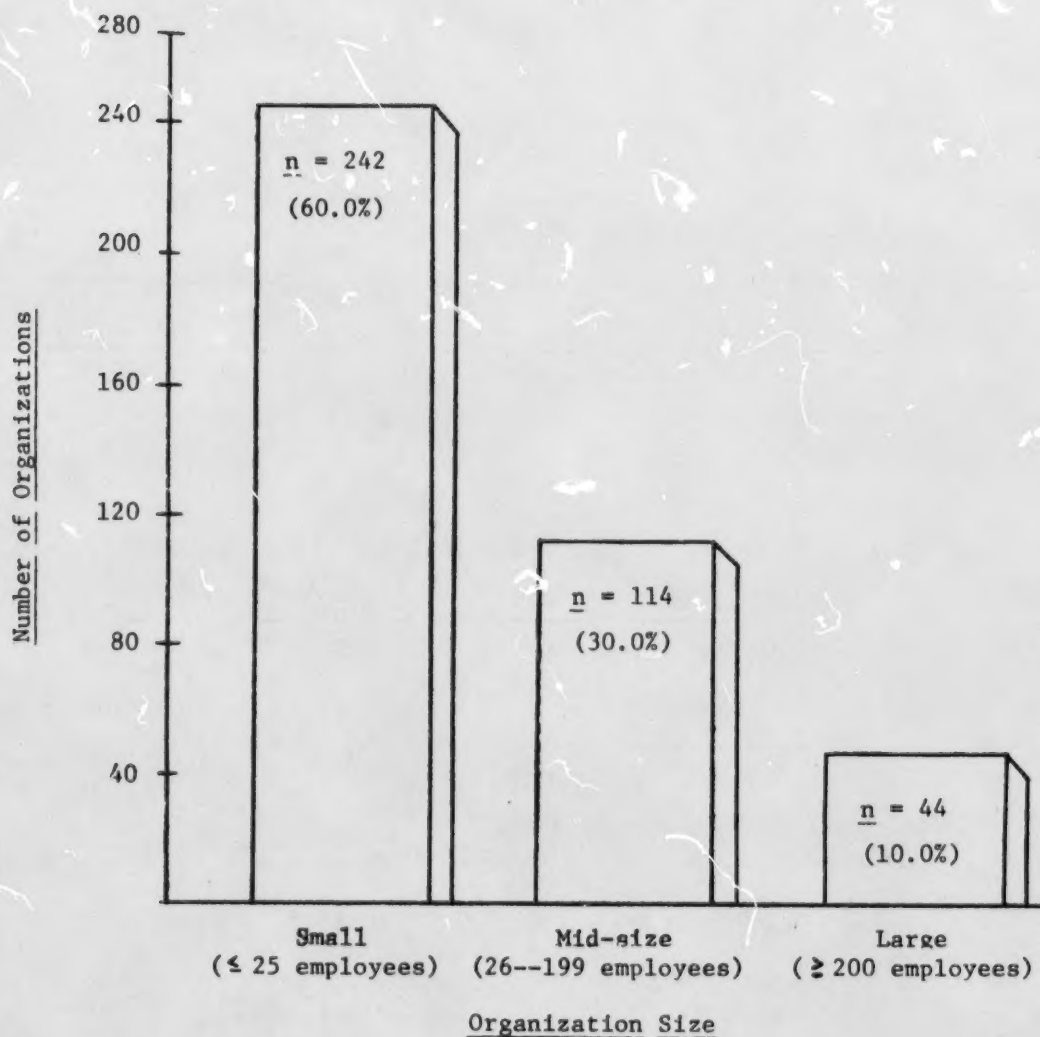


Figure 1.

The distribution of survey respondents by organization size.

Note: Organization size was unknown for a total of 21 organizations; these were deleted from all calculations describing the responses of small, mid-size, and large organizations.

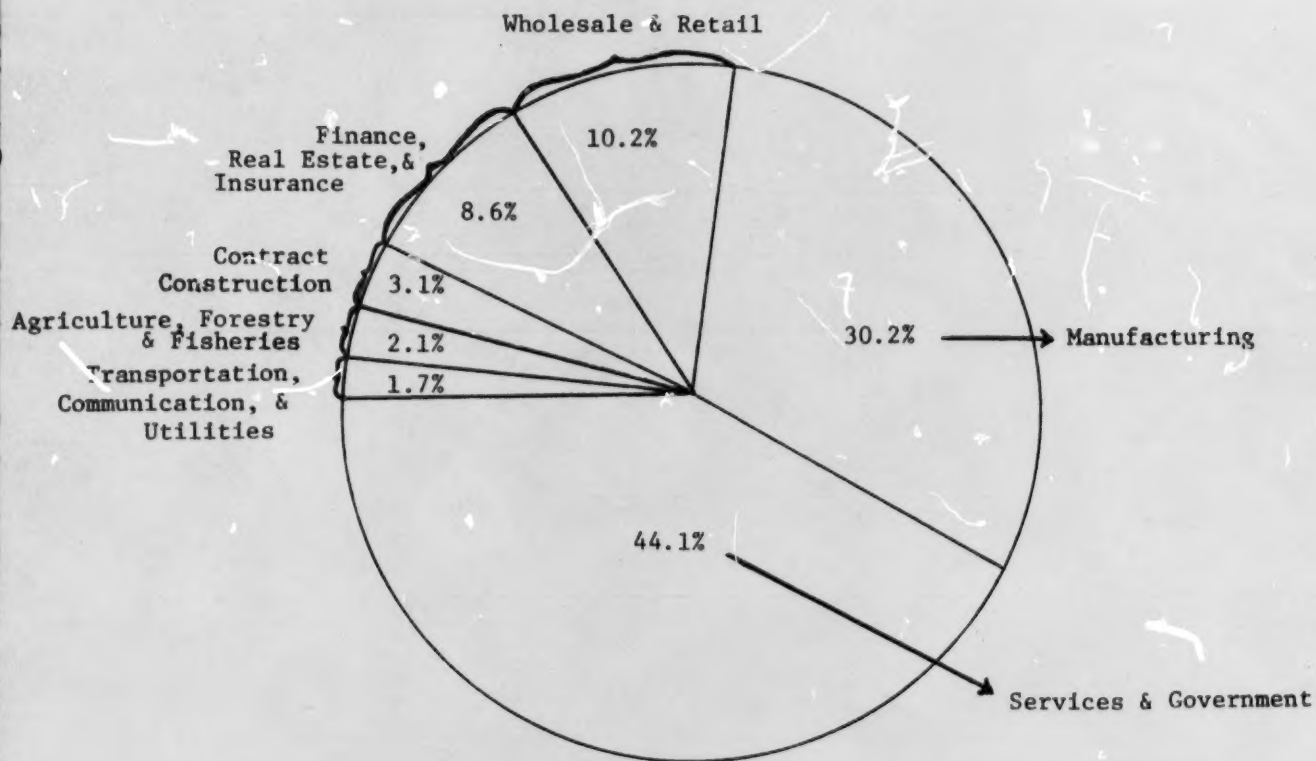


Figure 2.

The distribution of survey respondents by organization type.

maintained a work force of 25 people or less. In the area of finance, nearly 40% of all employers maintained a mid-sized staff (26--199 people), and in the areas of transportation and manufacturing a sizable percentage of employers maintained a work force that was mid-size or larger.

Table 1

Small, Mid-size, and Large Employers within Organization Types

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Size of Organization</u>					
	Small		Mid-size		Large	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Transport & Commun (n=7)	28.6%	(2)	42.9%	(3)	28.6%	(2)
Agriculture (n=9)	88.9%	(8)	11.1%	(1)	0.0%	(0)
Construction (n=13)	92.3%	(12)	0.0%	(0)	7.7%	(1)
Finance (n=36)	58.3%	(21)	38.9%	(14)	2.8%	(1)
Trade (n=43)	74.4%	(32)	20.9%	(9)	4.7%	(2)
Manufacturers (n=127)	47.2%	(60)	33.1%	(42)	19.7%	(25)
Services (n=165)	64.8%	(107)	27.3%	(45)	7.9%	(13)

Statistical Analysis

Using appropriate programs from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were prepared in order to analyze all available data. For each survey item, data representing the responding sample as a whole (N = 421) were analyzed first. Then, as appropriate, particular items were examined more closely for patterns within each level of the two classifying variables (organization size and organization type). Results are therefore presented as follows:

1. to describe the needs and opinions of all responding organizations;
2. to describe the responses of organizations grouped together according to the number of people they employ; and
3. to describe the responses of organizations grouped together by the major product or service they supply.

RESULTS

Background Information

Positions Held by Survey Respondents

When organizations were contacted for inclusion in this needs assessment effort, survey forms were routinely mailed to the attention of top-level executives or managers. This procedure was based on the straightforward assumption that employees in decision-making positions would be able to provide the most accurate information concerning employment needs and practices within the organizations they were representing. Therefore, before completing other survey items, respondents were asked: "What is your position in the organization?" (item #5).

As indicated on Table 2, the majority of respondents within the employer sample as a whole identified themselves as Presidents or Vice Presidents (46.2%). It should be noted that this category often included respondents who identified themselves as "owners," "executive directors," or others in similar top-level positions. A sizable percentage of respondents also held management positions (36.8%, including all types of management titles). Relatively few respondents were administrative assistants (5.0%), and only a small sub-group (12.0%) held any other type of job title. This indicates that the procedural strategy of mailing directly to top-level management was quite successful, and that the majority of targeted individuals actually took the time to complete the survey themselves.

The positions held by survey respondents were further examined for patterns by organization size and type. In relation to size, these findings emerged: The representatives of small organizations tended to identify themselves as Presidents or Vice Presidents (61.5%), mid-size organizations were represented by people in a variety of management roles (general, district, and area managers = 26.3%, personnel managers and training directors = 21.1%), and most large organizations were represented by personnel managers and employee training directors (56.8%). An analysis by organization type revealed no clear-cut pattern of differences according to variations in major product or service supplied (see Table 2).

Table 2

Positions Held by Respondents

	President or Vice President	Manager or Asst Manager	Personnel Manager or Training Dir.	Administrative Assistant	Other
<u>All Organizations</u>	46.2%	19.1%	17.7%	5.0%	12.0%
<u>Size of Organization</u>					
Small	61.5%	18.0%	4.2%	4.2%	12.1%
Mid-size	31.6%	26.3%	21.1%	7.0%	14.1%
Large	18.2%	15.9%	56.8%	4.5%	4.5%
<u>Type of Organization</u>					
Transport & Commun	57.1%	44.3%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
Agriculture	88.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%
Construction	53.8%	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%	30.8%
Finance	27.8%	36.1%	19.4%	2.8%	13.9%
Trade	50.0%	40.5%	7.1%	0.0%	2.4%
Manufacturers	50.0%	15.1%	22.2%	5.6%	7.1%
Services	43.5%	15.8%	19.0%	6.5%	15.2%

Personnel Information

Qualities Sought in Employee Candidates

Employers were asked to respond to two items which concerned their established recruitment preferences: the qualities they most sought in among employee candidates at the professional level (item #6) and at the non-professional level (item #7).

As a whole, respondents ranked the following three qualities as most important when considering the suitability of any employee candidate:

- #1) occupational or technical skills and experience;
- #2) a sense of personal responsibility; and
- #3) a willingness to work and learn.

As shown on Tables 3 and 4, these rank-order preferences held true regardless of the level of the position to be filled (i.e., professional or non-professional). Furthermore, respondents representing small, mid-size, and large organizations all had strikingly similar response patterns. They consistently ranked the same three qualities in the same order of importance. The single deviation from this pattern was among large employers, who indicated that formal credentials were of moderate importance (rank #3), but only when they were considering professional-level employee candidates (see Table 3).

Recruitment Sources

Next, employers were asked to indicate the recruitment sources they used when trying to fill job vacancies (item #8). As indicated in Table 5, the large majority of responding organizations (82.7%) reported relying more heavily on newspaper advertisements than on any other single recruitment source. Approximately one-third of all respondents also said they used these resources: private employment agencies (36.1%), the New Jersey State Employment Service (31.8%), and school placement offices (29.5% not including Mercer County Community College). Relatively small percentages of employers used professional publications (23.5%), the MCCC Placement Service (15.2%), or CETA (12.8%).

When examined by size categories, it was interesting to note that large employers reported using every possible recruitment source with greater frequency than did small or mid-size employers (see Table 5). Perhaps this indicates that maintaining a work force of at least 200 persons requires particularly broad-based recruiting efforts.

Table 3

The Three Most Sought-After Qualities in Professional-Level Employee Candidates

	Occupat/ Tech Skill	Responsibility	Willingness	Credentials
	Rank (%)	Rank (%)	Rank (%)	Rank (%)
<u>All Organizations</u>	#1 (35.9%)	#2 (30.2%)	#3 (21.5%)	-- --
<u>Size of Organizations</u>				
Small	#1 (31.9%)	#2 (31.5%)	#3 (25.2%)	-- --
Mid-size	#1 (40.2%)	#2 (30.4%)	#3 (19.6%)	-- --
Large	#1 (47.7%)	#2 (29.5%)	-- --	#3 (20.9%)

Table 4

The Three Most Sought-After Qualities in Non-Professional-Level Employee Candidates

	Occupat/ Tech Skill	Responsibility	Willingness
	Rank (%)	Rank (%)	Rank (%)
<u>All Organizations</u>	#1 (34.4%)	#2 (39.6%)	#3 (32.8%)
<u>Size of Organization</u>			
Small	#1 (32.0%)	#2 (36.9%)	#3 (32.4%)
Mid-size	#1 (28.1%)	#2 (39.5%)	#3 (29.8%)
Large	#1 (47.7%)	#2 (50.0%)	#3 (41.9%)

Table 5
Recruitment Sources Used to Fill Job Positions

	Private employment agencies	Newspaper ads	Professional publications	MCCC Placement Service	Other School Placement Office	N. J. State Employment Office	CETA	Other
<u>All Organizations</u>	36.1%	82.7%	23.5%	15.2%	29.5%	31.8%	12.8%	23.0%
<u>Size of Organization</u>								
Small	27.7%	76.4%	13.6%	9.9%	20.2%	14.0%	7.9%	22.7%
Mid-size	50.0%	89.5%	28.1%	16.7%	36.8%	48.2%	11.4%	19.3%
Large	56.8%	97.7%	43.2%	34.1%	50.0%	61.4%	29.5%	25.0%
<u>Type of Organization</u>								
Transport & Commun	57.1%	57.1%	42.9%	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	28.6%
Agriculture	0.0%	66.7%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%
Construction	15.4%	61.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	7.7%	30.8%
Finance	61.1%	88.9%	8.3%	11.1%	38.9%	36.1%	27.8%	27.8%
Trade	30.2%	74.4%	4.7%	9.3%	34.9%	25.6%	9.3%	18.6%
Manufacturers	43.3%	83.5%	16.5%	17.3%	27.6%	35.4%	15.0%	19.7%
Services	30.3%	85.9%	37.3%	17.3%	30.3%	31.4%	10.3%	24.3%

Recruitment sources were also examined by organization type categories. Patterns of usage by manufacturers and service organizations were consistent with those which described the responding sample as a whole--not a surprising overlap, given the relatively large sub-sample of respondents represented by these two types of organizations. There were, however, variations within other organization types. For example, employers in the area of finance, insurance, and real estate reported particularly frequent use of private employment agencies; and, while professional publications were a principal recruitment source for employers in transportation, communication, and utilities they were used only rarely by wholesalers and retailers. Finally, in the areas of contract construction and agriculture, employers reported unusually low levels of usage in relation to nearly all of the recruitment sources under investigation.

Hard-to-Fill Entry-level Jobs

Employers were asked to respond to these three survey items: first, whether there were entry-level jobs that their organizations found hard to fill (item #9); secondly, whether new or additional jobs were anticipated by their organizations over the next five years (item #10); and lastly, whether current job positions might soon need to be eliminated from their organizations (item #11). In each case, employers who responded in the affirmative were asked to specify the actual job titles that would be involved. These jobs were subsequently coded using the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, and codes were grouped for summary analysis into standard DOT occupational categories (see Appendix C).

As indicated on Table 6, hard to fill entry-level jobs were reported by just over one-third (36%) of all respondents. This problem was reported most frequently by mid-size employers (36.6%) and least frequently by large organizations (29.5%). Examination by type of organization revealed two relatively extreme responses: a strikingly low incidence of hard to fill entry-level jobs in the field of agriculture (11.1%), and an unusually high incidence of such jobs in the field of transportation and communication (66.7%).

What, then, were the entry-level jobs that were involved, and why did employers think of them as being difficult to fill? A total of 208 specific entry-level job titles, as well as the reasons why they were considered hard to fill, were analyzed. As indicated in Table 7, a large percentage of responding employers (41.4%) specified difficulty in filling clerical and

Table 6
Employers Reporting Hard to Fill Entry-level Jobs, Anticipated Job
Expansion, or Anticipated Job Elimination

	% Employers with Hard-to-fill Entry-level jobs	% Employers Anticipating New or Additional jobs	% Employers Anticipating Elimination of jobs
<u>All Organizations</u>	36.0%	42.3%	3.8%
<u>Size of Organization</u>			
Small	33.3%	45.2%	2.9%
Mid-size	36.6%	41.4%	2.6%
Large	29.5%	36.4%	9.5%
<u>Type of Organization</u>			
Transport & Commun	66.7%	57.1%	0.0%
Agriculture	11.1%	33.3%	0.0%
Construction	41.7%	46.2%	0.0%
Finance	44.4%	47.2%	0.0%
Trade	33.7%	50.0%	4.7%
Manufacturers	32.8%	40.0%	5.7%
Services	36.6%	40.4%	3.8%

Table 7
Hard to Fill Entry-Level Jobs and Anticipated Areas of Job Expansion:
Summarized by Major Occupational Categories

Occupational Category	% Employers Reporting Hard-to-Fill Entry-Level Jobs ^a	% Employers Anticipating Job Expansion ^b
Profess., tech., & managerial	25.6%	42.8%
Clerical & Sales	41.4%	26.3%
Service	4.3%	0.7%
Agricultural	.9%	0.0%
Processing	7.2%	7.1%
Machine Trades	7.7%	8.8%
Benchwork	2.4%	2.7%
Structural Work	6.3%	6.1%
Miscellaneous Occupat.	4.3%	5.4%

^a All percentages based on a sample of 208 specified entry-level job titles.

^b All percentages based on a sample of 298 specified job titles.

sales occupations (e.g., secretary, typist, receptionist; teller, book-keeper, accounts clerk; and positions in retail sales). In addition, many employers (25.6%) reported difficulty in filling entry-level professional, technical, and managerial positions (especially medical, laboratory, and dental assistants). In three other occupational categories, at least 5% of the responding employers reported the existence of hard to fill entry-level jobs: machine trades, especially mechanics and machinery repairs (7.7%); processing occupations, especially in the production of chemicals and synthetics (7.2%); and structural work occupations, particularly electrical assembly and repair (6.3%).

Employers tended to attribute their problems in filling these entry-level jobs to several factors: 1) an inadequate supply of trained employees as compared with a large number of openings (39.2%); 2) a serious absence of necessary job skills among entry-level applicants (22.2%); 3) a lack of reliable, stable, dependable workers (13.6%); 4) the fact that entry-level applicants had little or no prior work experience (11.9%); 5) low wages (8.5%); and 6) unusual time demands on entry-level employees, including shift work (4.5%).

Anticipated Job Expansion and Job Elimination

Employers were next asked to consider the availability of jobs over the upcoming 5 years. Would there be new or additional jobs because of expansion or development? Would any current job positions need to be eliminated? Based on their responses to these two items, it seems that Mercer County employers view the immediate future with cautious optimism. As shown in Table 6, nearly half of all survey respondents (42.3%) said they anticipated the need for new or additional jobs, while a strikingly small group (3.8%) anticipated losing current jobs.

When examined by organization size, large employers emerged as the least optimistic group--a possible cause for concern, since they provide a disproportionately large percentage of available jobs within the county. Among large employers, just 36.4% predicted the need for additional jobs, while 9.5% anticipated the elimination of some current positions. Small and mid-size organizations were more hopeful: job loss was anticipated by only 2.9% of the small employers, and 2.6% of the mid-size ones.

Analysis by organization type revealed relative consistency in relation to the need for new or additional jobs, although differences did emerge in

relation to job loss. Employers in four categories (transportation and communication; agriculture; contract construction; and finance, insurance, and real estate) anticipated no need whatsoever for cutbacks in current jobs. Among the organizations where anticipated job elimination was seen as a problem, concern was expressed by 5.7% of manufacturers, 4.7% of wholesalers and retailers, and 3.8% of all service organizations.

Employers who anticipated change in either direction--additions or cutbacks--were asked to specify the jobs that would be involved. Although 147 employers indicated the probability of eliminating current jobs, only 9 actual job titles were specified; this was too small a sub-sample for further analysis. Employers seemed more willing, however, to specify new or additional jobs, and a total of 298 job titles were specified.

Table 7 shows that the majority of responding employers (42.8%) specified an increased need for jobs in professional, technical, and managerial occupations (e.g., engineers and architects, medical and dental technicians, administrators and managers). Many organizations (27.3%) also anticipated an expanded need in clerical and sales occupations (e.g., data processing, real estate sales). Increased need of a lesser magnitude was anticipated in machine trades occupations (8.8%), processing occupations (7.8%), and structural work occupations (6.1%).

Experience Hiring MCCC Students or Graduates and CETA-Trainees

Employers were asked if they had ever hired students or graduates of Mercer County Community College (item #12) or personnel trained by CETA (item #13). If so, respondents indicated whether or not such employees had been "adequately prepared" in relation to an array of traits and qualities--which, for the purposes of item comparability, were identical to the ones they had previously rank-ordered when considering desirable traits among employee candidates.

While almost half of all respondents (42.2%) reported some experience hiring the students or graduates of Mercer County Community College, a relatively small proportion (21.4%) reported hiring CETA-trained personnel (see Table 8). When examined by organization size, an interestingly comparable pattern emerged. Large organizations were the most frequent employers of personnel trained by the College (55.8%) and by CETA (33.3%); mid-size organizations were next in both cases (47.4% had hired Mercer County Community College students/graduates, 21.2% had hired CETA-trainees); and small

Table 8
Organizations Hiring MCCC Students or Graduates and CETA-Trainees

	Experience Hiring MCCC-trained Personnel	Experience Hiring CETA-trained Personnel
<u>All Organizations</u>	42.2%	21.4%
<u>Size of Organization</u>		
Small	34.9%	14.6%
Mid-size	47.4%	21.2%
Large	55.8%	33.3%
<u>Type of Organization</u>		
Transport & Commun	28.6%	0.0%
Agriculture	44.4%	0.0%
Construction	30.8%	7.7%
Finance	38.9%	33.3%
Trade	51.2%	16.3%
Manufacturers	27.2%	20.8%
Services	52.4%	23.6%

organizations were the least frequent employers of either College-trained or CETA-trained personnel (34.9% and 14.6% respectively).

Employment frequencies were also examined by organization type categories. Students or graduates of Mercer County Community College were hired most frequently by service organizations and in trades occupations. CETA-trained employees were hired most often in the area of finance, insurance and real estate; while respondents in the field of agriculture and in the area of transportation and communications reported no experience whatsoever as employers of CETA-trained personnel.

Satisfaction with MCCC Students or Graduates

In general, those organizations which reported hiring MCCC-trained employees were quite satisfied with the education which the College had provided. As shown in Table 9, at least 80% expressed satisfaction in relation to the personal characteristics (appearance and personality), sense of personal responsibility, and occupational/technical skills of their MCCC-educated employees. At least 90% were satisfied with their employees' ability to get along with co-workers, their willingness to work and learn, and their preparation in basic skills. The single area in which Mercer's students/graduates received relatively low ratings involved their management skills: satisfaction with this kind of preparation was expressed by just over half (54.6%) of all respondents.

When examined by organization size and type, a few salient points emerged. First, large organizations consistently indicated higher levels of satisfaction with MCCC-educated employees than did either small or mid-size employers. Also, since all organizations had ranked occupational/technical skills as the single most important quality they sought in employee candidates, it should be noted that Mercer graduates were rated slightly less favorably in this area than in others, especially by mid-size organizations and by employers in finance, insurance, and real estate.

Satisfaction with CETA-Trainees

Satisfaction with CETA-trained employees was expressed by at least 60% of all respondents in relation to basic skills and the willingness to work and learn, and by at least 80% of respondents in relation to personal appearance and personality and the ability to get along with co-workers (see Table 10). Ratings were somewhat lower in the areas of occupational/technical skill (55.7%) and sense of personal responsibility (57.1%). Interestingly, these two low-

Table 9
Employer Satisfaction with Traits of MCCC Students or Graduates

	<u>% Employers Expressing Satisfaction</u>						
	Basic skills	Occupational technical skills	Management skills	Responsibility	Appearance & Personality	Ability to get along	Willingness to work & learn
<u>All Organizations</u>	91.2%	84.1%	54.6%	85.9%	87.1%	94.2%	92.3%
<u>Size of Organization</u>							
Small	89.7%	83.3%	50.9%	82.6%	84.6%	89.4%	91.3%
Mid-size	90.0%	73.5%	44.4%	86.5%	89.7%	97.3%	89.5%
Large	100.0%	95.8%	63.6%	87.0%	82.6%	100.0%	95.7%
<u>Type of Organization</u>							
Transport & Commun	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Agriculture	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Construction	75.0%	75.0%	50.0%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Finance	100.0%	60.0%	42.9%	75.0%	90.9%	90.0%	83.3%
Trade	95.0%	88.2%	71.4%	78.9%	75.0%	95.0%	94.7%
Manufacturers	88.0%	81.8%	41.7%	87.5%	82.6%	95.5%	82.6%
Services	90.2%	86.1%	50.9%	88.3%	90.8%	94.7%	94.9%

satisfaction traits were ranked first and second, respectively, when employers indicated the qualities they most sought in employee candidates.

As was the case when rating Mercer-educated employees, large organizations tended to express more favorable opinions of CETA-trainees than did either small or mid-size employers. In relation to the top ranked employee quality of occupational/technical skill, fewer than half of the small and mid-size organizations expressed satisfaction, and employers in financial and trades occupations were the least satisfied.

Table 10
Employer Satisfaction with Traits of CETA-Trainees

	<u>% Employers Expressing Satisfaction</u>					
	Basic skills	Occupational/ Technical skills	Responsibility	Appearance & Personality	Ability to get along	Willingness to work & learn
<u>All Organizations</u>	62.7%	55.7%	57.1%	80.9%	82.9%	65.3%
<u>Size of Organization</u>						
Small	54.8%	41.9%	48.4%	74.2%	83.9%	65.6%
Mid-size	47.4%	47.1%	56.3%	76.5%	70.6%	41.2%
Large	84.6%	75.0%	58.3%	90.9%	91.7%	75.0%
<u>Type of Organization</u>						
Transport & Commun	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Agriculture	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Construction	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Finance	70.0%	22.2%	55.6%	66.7%	80.0%	70.0%
Trade	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	100.0%	12.1%	25.0%
Manufacturers	47.6%	42.9%	35.0%	12.0%	65.0%	50.0%
Services	74.3%	77.4%	78.1%	28.0%	93.5%	818%

Note. NA indicates "not applicable." Employers in transportation and communication and agriculture reported no experience hiring CETA-trainees; consequently, ratings of satisfaction were not possible.

Training Information

Current Training Practices and Unmet Training Needs

Several items were designed to assess practices and needs in relation to employee training. Respondents indicated whether or not their organizations conducted "any training to upgrade or develop new employee skills" (item #14); and, if so, who was responsible for such training. Respondents were also asked to identify the incentives they offered to employees who pursued additional skill training (item #15), and whether all of their employee training needs were being satisfied (item #17).

Among the respondent sample as a whole, the majority of employers (70.1%) said they did conduct some type of training designed to upgrade or improve employee skills. As shown in Table 11, this was particularly true among large employers (86.0%) and for mid-size employers (85.0%), while small employers were considerably less likely to provide employee training (58.2%). When examined by organization type, at least 70% of the respondents in each category reported offering some type of employee training, with the exception of agricultural organizations (33.3%), and construction companies (38.5%).

As indicated on Table 12, most organizations relied on in-house expertise to conduct their employee training, especially that of department supervisors (40.1%). Training directors (16.9%) and personnel managers (11.4%) were also involved in employee training, though to a much lesser extent. Some employers sought training expertise outside of their own organizations. Professional associations and schools or training agencies were the most frequently used external resources (16.9% in each case), and consultants were the next most frequently used (10.7%). Mercer County Community College and CETA were also used, but with relative infrequency (5.0% and 1.0%, respectively).

When examined by organization size, several interesting points emerged. Small organizations, which generally conducted less employee training overall, also reported less frequent use of each specific type of training resource. Mid-size and large employers, which were directly comparable in the overall amount of training they offered, seemed to rely on different kinds of training resources. For example, large employers were more likely to use specialized in-house expertise; that is, training directors and personnel managers, rather than department supervisors. In addition, with the exception of CETA (which was never used), large employers used all types of external training

Table 11
Current Employee Training and Unmet Training Needs

	% Employers Conducting Employee Training	% Employers With Unmet Training Needs
<u>All Organizations</u>	70.1%	14.9%
<u>Size of Organization</u>		
Small	58.2%	9.1%
Mid-size	85.0%	20.0%
Large	86.0%	30.8%
<u>Type of Organization</u>		
Transport & Commun	100.0%	0.0%
Agriculture	33.3%	11.1%
Construction	38.5%	15.4%
Finance	75.0%	8.6%
Trade	76.2%	9.3%
Manufacturers	69.6%	13.2%
Services	70.9%	19.0%

Table 12

Who Conducts Current Employee-Training Programs

	Department Head or Supervisor	Training Director	Personnel Manager	Professional Associations	Consultants	Schools or Training Agencies (not MCCC)	Mercer County Community College	CETA
<u>All Organizations</u>	40.1%	16.9%	11.4%	16.9%	10.7%	16.9%	5.0%	1.0%
<u>Size of Organization</u>								
Small	28.1%	9.1%	7.4%	13.6%	5.0%	12.8%	3.7%	0.0%
Mid-size	63.2%	21.1%	16.7%	18.4%	12.3%	15.8%	3.5%	2.6%
Large	54.5%	34.1%	18.6%	25.0%	27.3%	18.2%	11.4%	0.0%
<u>Type of Organization</u>								
Transport & Commun	85.7%	28.6%	0.0%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Agriculture	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Finance	44.4%	36.1%	13.9%	11.1%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Trade	53.5%	20.9%	23.8%	14.0%	2.3%	20.9%	2.3%	0.0%
Manufacturers	48.8%	8.7%	14.2%	7.9%	7.1%	12.6%	5.5%	0.0%
Services	32.4%	18.4%	7.6%	25.4%	14.6%	18.4%	7.0%	2.2%

resources with greater frequency than did mid-size employers. Inspection of the data according to organization type revealed at least one overriding similarity: In most types of organizations, employee training was conducted in-house, and usually by department supervisors.

Therefore, although most survey respondents did conduct some type of skill training for their employees, a great deal of this training was in the form of on-the-job instruction by an employee's immediate supervisor. Training opportunities of a more formal nature--conducted by professionals, consultants, or training agencies--tended to be readily available only to the employees of large organizations (especially in service occupations).

Next, respondents indicated the incentives they offered to employees who decided to pursue additional training. Table 13 shows that two incentives were equally popular within the respondent sample as a whole: assistance with tuition fees (48.9%) and possible subsequent promotion (48.7%). Release-time from work was offered by 20.9%, and many employers provided no incentives whatsoever (21.1%).

The relative popularity of tuition assistance and possible promotion remained consistent throughout all types of analyses (e.g., by size and by organization type). However, when examined by size, small employers emerged as the least likely group to offer any kind of incentives, with 23.9% offering none at all. On the other hand, most large employers made some type of incentive available, with a full 90.9% offering tuition assistance and 65.9% offering possible promotions.

In summary, the majority of respondents reported conducting some type of employee training, using a variety of training resources, and providing their employees with training incentives. Nonetheless, a small but noteworthy percentage of organizations (14.9%) indicated training needs that were not fully satisfied. When examined by size, a fascinating pattern emerged: with increases in the size of an organization's personnel complement, there were concomitant increments in both the availability of current training and in the perceived need for additional training (see Table 11). That is, small employers reported the least amount of ongoing employee training (58.2%), and the lowest frequency of unmet training needs (9.1%). Mid-size employers provided more training (85.0%), and perceived more unmet training needs (20.0%). Large organizations conducted the most frequent training (86.0%) and also reported unmet training needs with the greatest frequency (30.8%).

Table 13
Incentives to Employees for Taking Further Training

	None	Release-time from work	Tuition Assistance	Possible Promotion	Other
<u>All Organizations</u>	21.1%	20.9%	48.9%	48.7%	10.7%
<u>Size of Organization</u>					
Small	23.9%	15.7%	31.4%	38.8%	12.0%
Mid-size	15.8%	22.8%	60.5%	60.5%	7.0%
Large	0.0%	20.5%	90.9%	65.9%	15.9%
<u>Type of Organization</u>					
Transport & Commun	0.0%	14.3%	100.0%	71.4%	28.6%
Agriculture	33.3%	22.2%	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%
Construction	38.5%	0.0%	15.4%	38.5%	23.1%
Finance	5.6%	25.0%	77.8%	52.8%	5.6%
Trade	20.9%	9.3%	39.5%	58.1%	4.7%
Manufacturers	26.8%	8.7%	44.1%	51.2%	7.9%
Services	19.5%	32.4%	50.3%	43.8%	13.5%

Perceptions of Mercer County Community College as a Training Resource

One important new direction at Mercer County Community College has been to provide external organizations with employee training programs in five areas: management skills, communication skills, technical skills, human resources training, and entry-level skills training. Survey items were developed to assess the extent to which employers were aware of the College's training capabilities (item #16), and to determine interest in obtaining the College's training services (item #18).

On the whole, awareness of the College's training capabilities was moderately high (see Table 14). Respondents were most aware of the College's expertise with technical skills training (63.9%), which may reflect a generalization of the College's reputation for offering degree programs in a range of technologies. There was slightly less awareness of the College's training capabilities in these areas: communications skills (58.3%), entry-level skills (57.5%), and management skills (55.2%). Awareness was lowest in the relatively non-traditional area of human resources training (48.2%).

As shown on Table 14, employer awareness varied very little by organization size, although large employers did indicate slightly more awareness than did either small or mid-size employers. Analysis by organization type also revealed relative consistency in levels of awareness, with notable variations only in relation to entry-level skills (from a high of 85.7% in the field of communications to a low of 44.4% among financial organizations), and communication skills (from a high of 83.3% in communications, to a low of 36.2% among service organizations).

As shown on Table 15, interest was moderate (19.2%) among all respondents in relation to obtaining MCCC's employee training services. In general, large organizations reported a substantially greater level of general interest (30.0%) than did either mid-size or small employers (18.1% and 17.6% respectively). When examined by organization type, service organizations expressed the greatest level of interest (24.3%).

Table 15 also describes employer interest in obtaining training in each of five specialized areas. Overall, expressions of interest were as follows: management skills training = 8.1%, technical skills training = 7.1%, human resources training = 5.7%, communication skills training = 5.1%, and entry-level skills training = 4.8%. Large employers consistently expressed the highest levels of interest, and did so in the following order: communication

Table 14

Employer Awareness of Mercer County Community College as an Employee Training Resource

	<u>Specialized Training Areas</u>				
	Management skills	Communica- tion skills	Technical skills	Human Resources	Entry-level skills
<u>All Organizations</u>	55.2%	58.3%	63.9%	48.2%	57.5%
<u>Size of Organization</u>					
Small	53.2%	55.9%	62.1%	45.4%	53.7%
Mid-size	51.7%	57.0%	62.2%	46.0%	51.7%
Large	53.8%	59.0%	67.5%	50.0%	70.0%
<u>Type of Organization</u>					
Transport & Commun	57.1%	83.3%	71.4%	57.1%	85.7%
Agriculture ^a	71.4%	71.4%	71.4%	71.4%	71.4%
Construction	55.6%	50.0%	55.6%	50.0%	60.0%
Finance	55.6%	60.7%	70.4%	40.7%	44.4%
Trade	51.4%	52.9%	57.1%	44.1%	55.9%
Manufacturers	55.4%	47.1%	62.5%	48.5%	52.9%
Services	55.2%	36.2%	65.8%	49.0%	61.8%

a. Awareness data for agricultural organizations should be interpreted with caution, as they seem to represent a response set: out of the 7 respondents in this category, 5 consistently reported "awareness" and 2 did not.

Table 15

Employer Interest in Obtaining Training Through Mercer County Community College

	<u>Expression of General Interest in Training</u>	<u>Interest in Specialized Training Areas</u>				
		<u>Management skills</u>	<u>Communica- tion skills</u>	<u>Technical skills</u>	<u>Human Resources</u>	<u>Entry-level skills</u>
<u>All Organizations</u>	19.2%	8.1%	5.1%	7.1%	5.7%	4.8%
<u>Size of Organization</u>						
Small	17.6%	7.9%	4.5%	6.6%	5.4%	3.7%
Mid-size	18.1%	6.1%	5.3%	7.0%	3.5%	5.3%
Large	30.0%	11.4%	13.6%	13.6%	11.4%	6.8%
<u>Type of Organization^a</u>						
Transport & Commun	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%
Agriculture	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction	23.1%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%
Finance	14.3%	8.3%	5.6%	5.6%	8.3%	2.8%
Trade	15.4%	7.0%	2.3%	9.3%	2.3%	9.3%
Manufacturers	13.4%	3.1%	3.9%	5.5%	0.8%	3.9%
Services	24.3%	11.9%	8.6%	8.6%	9.7%	4.3%

a. Because of the small number of organizations contained in the majority of organization type categories, the relatively small percentages of "interest in obtaining training" usually represent just a few organizations. Therefore, particular caution should be exerted in interpreting these data.

and technical skills (13.6% each), management skills and human relations training (11.4% each), and entry-level skills (6.8%). Analysis by organization type revealed that service organizations--which represented the largest organization type category, and expressed the highest overall level of interest in the College's training--most wanted programs in management skills (11.9%), human resources (9.7%), and communication and technical skills (8.6% each).

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The overriding purpose of the Employer Needs Assessment Project was to determine the present and future personnel and training needs of Mercer County employers.

More specifically, five objectives were defined at the outset of the project. Each of these objectives is presented below, followed by a summary of major findings and data-based recommendations for appropriate responses by the College

OBJECTIVE #1: To assess employers' practices and preferences in the recruitment of personnel.

RECRUITMENT SOURCES

Needs assessment data indicate that the majority of employers use newspaper advertisements to recruit new employees. Other popular recruitment sources are private employment agencies and the New Jersey State Employment Office. Use of MCCC job placement services is less frequent.

Recommendations

1. Increase employers' awareness of all personnel placement services available to them through the College. Activities could include the distribution of published materials as well as in-person contacts between employers and representatives of the College.

2. Target contacts concerning job placement services with representatives of the following underserved employment sectors:

- a. the community's broad base of small employers (those employing 25 or fewer);
- b. employers in the field of agriculture and agricultural services;
- c. employers in the field of construction, including special trade contractors;
- d. employers in the areas of finance, insurance, and real estate;

- e. employers involved in wholesale and retail trade.

Recruitment Preferences

Given an array of qualities from which to choose, employers consistently rank these traits as most important when recruiting new employees: 1) occupational or technical skills and experience; 2) a sense of personal responsibility; and 3) the willingness to work and learn. These preferences hold true regardless of variations in organization size or type, or the level of the job position to be filled (i.e., professional as well as non-professional).

The College has traditionally focused on the first of these three characteristics, insuring quality in the design and content of its various career-oriented curricula. The findings of this needs assessment suggest supplementing this focus with additional efforts in more non-traditional directions.

Recommendations

3. Provide needs assessment findings to all College personnel involved in career counseling so that the importance of this information can be transmitted directly to students.

4. Integrate into the day-to-day educational experiences of all MCCC students an emphasis on the personal qualities which employers most seek. Those who are expected to be responsible and cooperative as learners will be better prepared to become responsible and cooperative as employees.

5. Design and implement intensive, non-traditional learning experiences for students who have immediate plans to enter (or re-enter) the employment market. Stress the importance which employers place on personal qualities (for example, structure role-play situations of successful job interviews).

OBJECTIVE #2: To determine employer satisfaction with the College's ability to educate students for meaningful employment.

Satisfaction with MCCC-educated Employees

In order to more fully understand employers' perceptions of MCCC vis-à-vis their own personnel needs, this Project explored levels of satisfaction with Mercer-educated employees. In general, satisfaction levels are high. In particular, employers think of MCCC students and graduates as personable, willing to learn, and well-versed in basic skills.

In the area of management skills, satisfaction is more moderate. In addition, since employers rank "occupational and technical expertise" as the single most desired trait among employees, particular attention should be directed towards maintaining high levels of satisfaction in this area. That is, needs assessment data suggest the importance of College-wide attention to issues of accountability and educational/vocational outcomes.

Recommendations

6. Initiate non-traditional approaches (e.g., "employment skills" workshops) to develop management skills among Mercer Students.

7. Develop a system for measuring the occupational and technical skills which are the most employment-relevant educational outcomes for each career program in the College.

8. Integrate outcomes measurement into the College's annual review of specific program areas.

OBJECTIVE #3: To analyze current and future manpower demands as perceived by the local employment community.

Hard to Fill Entry-Level Jobs

Hard to fill entry-level jobs--which predominantly involve clerical and sales personnel--are reported by a substantial proportion of respondents in these types of organizations: transportation, communication, and utilities; construction; and finance, insurance, and real estate. In all areas, employers present these reasons for their difficulty in filling entry-level jobs: 1) an inadequate supply of entry-level applicants, 2) the lack of necessary job skills among applicants, and 3) the absence of a sense of personal responsibility among applicants.

Recommendations

9. To satisfy employers' needs for qualified entry level job applicants, stress the acquisition of both job skills and personal responsibility by all MCCC students (see recommendations #4., #5., and #6.).

10. On the assumption that younger students are most likely to seek entry level employment, focus recruitment efforts in local high schools to encourage

increased enrollment by students of traditional college-going age in the following areas of study:

- a. Commerce (especially secretarial science, data processing, general business);
- b. Telecommunications;
- c. Math and Engineering (especially the electrical technologies);
- d. All entry-level skills training programs (e.g., account clerk, clerical, retail sales, data entry).

Anticipated Areas of Job Elimination and Job Expansion

In general, employers' projections for new or additional jobs--primarily at the professional, technical, and managerial levels--far exceed their projections for job loss throughout Mercer County. The notable exception to this pattern involves organizations which employ at least 200 people.

Areas in which employers simultaneously anticipate a higher-than-average rate of job expansion and a lower-than-average rate of job loss include: electrical and machinery manufacturing; business and health services; transportation, communication, and utilities; construction; and finance, insurance, and real estate.

Conversely, employers in educational and social services are projecting both lower-than-average job expansion and greater-than-average job loss.

11. Encourage increased student enrollment in the following areas of study, particularly those which lead students to continue their education and seek subsequent professional/technical/managerial employment:

- a. the electrical and engineering technologies;
- b. data processing;
- c. nursing, and the medical and dental technologies;
- d. telecommunications;
- e. accounting, general business, and business administration.

12. Examine patterns of student enrollment in the following programs of study--which, according to needs assessment data, may be preparing students to enter a diminishing employment market:

- a. education assistant;
- b. library/media assistant;
- c. community service assistant.

13. Given the general pessimism among community employers concerning projections for job availability in the educational and social services, new or expanded curricula in these areas (e.g., education of the handicapped, child care) should not be developed without conducting statistically rigorous needs assessments to document specific employment demands.

OBJECTIVE #4: To assess employer needs and attitudes in relation to providing their employees with additional skill training.

Current Training Practices and Unmet Training Needs

In general, most local employers report conducting some type of "training to upgrade or develop new employee skills," although this usually takes the form of on-the-job instruction by department heads and supervisors. When outside expertise is sought, employers turn to professional associations, and to schools or training agencies. MCCC captures a small segment of this market: self-reported users are concentrated in the health services and in industries which manufacture electrical/electronic machinery and equipment.

Popular incentives to employees who pursue additional skill training are tuition assistance and possible subsequent promotion. Tuition assistance seems most readily available from large employers (200 or more employees) and from employers in these areas: transportation, communication, and utilities; and finance, insurance, and real estate. Finally, despite the range of training opportunities and incentives that are currently available to their employees, a small but noteworthy group of employers report organizational training needs that are not being satisfied.

Recommendations

14. Explore strategies for attracting, as users of MCCC employee training services, members of those employment sectors where other schools and training agencies are already recognized (and used with some frequency) as valuable sources of skill training expertise.

15. Use needs assessment data to develop additional marketing strategies for the expanded delivery of MCCC training services.

Perceptions of MCCC as a Training Resource

On the whole, employer awareness of the College's training capabilities

is moderate, ranging from a high of 64% (indicating awareness of technical skills training) to a low of 48% (indicating awareness of human resources training).

Nonetheless, a substantial group of employers--representing every employment sector in the county, particularly service organizations and manufacturers--express definite interest in obtaining training services from MCCC. Overall, training priorities are as follows: management skills, technical skills, human resources skills, communications skills, entry-level skills.

Recommendations

16. Increase general, community-wide awareness of the College's training capabilities, in order to stimulate employer demands for such services. Stress service availability in the same priority order which emerged from the needs assessment data.

OBJECTIVE #5: *To strengthen the College-community relationship in general by encouraging productive two-way communication.*

Recommendations

17. Continue and extend the two-way communications precedent which was established by the Employer Needs Assessment Project as follows:

- a. acknowledge the participation and support of every responding employer by forwarding an Executive Summary of Project findings;
- b. implement appropriate follow-up contacts between the College and all of the responding employers who offered comments, suggestions, ideas, and requests during the Needs Assessment Project.

APPENDIX A:
MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
(COVER LETTER and INSTRUMENT)



MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, 1200 OLD TRENTON ROAD, TRENTON, N. J. 08690 (609) 586-4800

Office of the President

March 28, 1980

Dear Mercer County Employer:

Mercer County Community College is conducting a county-wide survey of business, industry, and government in cooperation with the Mercer County-Trenton Private Industry Council, the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce, the Hightstown-East Windsor Chamber of Commerce, and the Princeton Chamber of Commerce.

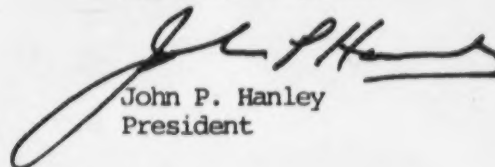
The purpose of the survey is to determine local employment and training needs. This will enable the College to develop and modify its educational and vocational training programs accordingly.

The survey will not be effective without your cooperation. Please take a few moments to complete and return the enclosed survey by April 18. The information will be treated confidentially, and participants will receive a report on the survey's major findings.

We believe that your organization, and the community as a whole, will benefit from this effort and we urge your participation. If you have any questions, please phone Dr. Debra Klinman, Project Coordinator, at 586-0730.

Again, my sincere thanks. Your cooperation is appreciated.

With best regards,



John P. Hanley
President

enclosure



MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Organization name _____ 2. Phone # _____
3. Address _____
(street)

(city and state) _____ (zip code) _____
4. What is the major product or service supplied by the organization? _____
5. What is your position in the organization? (Please check one box.)
- ☐ President or Vice President
 - ☐ Manager or Assistant Manager (General, District, or Area)
 - ☐ Personnel Manager, Assistant Personnel Manager, or Training Director
 - ☐ Public Relations Director
 - ☐ Administrative Assistant
 - ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

6. When trying to fill a *professional-level* position, what are the three most important qualities your organization looks for in employee candidates? (Please check three choices. Then rank your three choices in order of their importance: 1 = most important; 2 = second most important; 3 = third most important.)

- | | Rank
(1, 2, or 3) |
|---|----------------------|
| ☐ Basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics) | _____ |
| ☐ Occupational or technical skills and experience | _____ |
| ☐ Management skills | _____ |
| ☐ Credentials (degree, certification, license) | _____ |
| ☐ Sense of personal responsibility (dependability, reliability, stability) | _____ |
| ☐ Personal appearance and personality | _____ |
| ☐ Willingness to work and learn | _____ |
| ☐ Ability to get along with others | _____ |
| ☐ Other (Please specify) _____ | _____ |

When trying to fill a position at a non-professional level, what are the three most important qualities your organization looks for in employee candidates? (Please check three choices. Then rank your three choices in order of their importance: 1=most important; 2=second most important; 3=third most important.)

- | | Rank
(1, 2, or 3) |
|---|----------------------|
| ☐ Basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics) | _____ |
| ☐ Occupational or technical skills and experience | _____ |
| ☐ Management skills | _____ |
| ☐ Credentials (degree, certification, license) | _____ |
| ☐ Sense of personal responsibility (dependability, reliability, stability) | _____ |
| ☐ Personal appearance and personality | _____ |
| ☐ Willingness to work and learn | _____ |
| ☐ Ability to get along with others | _____ |
| ☐ Other (Please specify) _____ | _____ |

8. What recruitment sources does your organization use to fill positions? (Please check as many as apply.)

- ☐ Private employment agencies
- ☐ Newspaper advertisements
- ☐ Professional publications
- ☐ Mercer County Community College Placement Service
- ☐ Other college, high school, or technical school placement office
- ☐ New Jersey State Employment Service
- ☐ CETA
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

9. Are there any entry-level positions that your organization tends to have difficulty in filling? (Please check one box.)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes

If "yes," please list these difficult-to-fill positions. Also indicate the main reason for the difficulty in filling each position.

Position	Reason
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

10. Within the next 5 years, does your organization anticipate a need for any new or additional job positions because of expansion or development? (Please check one box.)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes

If "yes," please list the job positions that are anticipated. (Be as specific as possible.)

11. Within the next 5 years, does your organization anticipate that any current job positions may need to be eliminated?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes

If "yes," please list the job positions that may be eliminated. (Be as specific as possible.)

12. Has your organization ever employed any students or graduates of Mercer County Community College? (Please check one box.)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes

If "yes," do you think that — as employees — these students or graduates of Mercer County Community College have been adequately prepared to meet your organization's needs in relation to . . . (Please circle "yes" or "no" for each of the following.)

(continued on next page)

Basic skills (reading, spelling, mathematics)	yes	no
Occupational or technical skills	yes	no
Management skills	yes	no
Sense of personal responsibility	yes	no
Personal appearance and personality	yes	no
Ability to get along with co-workers	yes	no
Willingness to work and learn	yes	no

Comments: _____

13. Has your organization ever hired any employees who were trained by CETA? (Please check one box.)

- ☐ No
☐ Don't know
☐ Yes

If "yes," do you think that these CETA-trained employees have been adequately prepared to meet your organization's needs in relation to . . . (Please circle "yes" or "no" for each of the following.)

Basic skills	yes	no
Occupational or technical skills	yes	no
Sense of personal responsibility	yes	no
Personal appearance and personality	yes	no
Ability to get along with co-workers	yes	no
Willingness to work and learn	yes	no

Comments: _____

TRAINING INFORMATION

14. Does your organization currently conduct any training to upgrade or develop new employee skills? (Please check one box.)

- ___ No
 ___ Yes

If yes, who conducts this training? (Please check as many as apply.)

- ___ Personnel manager
 ___ Training director
 ___ Department head or supervisor
 ___ Mercer County Community College
 ___ CETA
 ___ Professional associations or societies (Please specify) _____

- ___ Outside consultants (Please specify) _____
 ___ Other school or training agency (Please specify) _____

15. What incentives, if any, does your organization offer to employees for taking further training? (Please check as many as apply.)

- ___ None
 ___ Release-time from work
 ___ Assistance with tuition fees
 ___ Possible subsequent promotion
 ___ Other (Please specify) _____

16. Mercer County Community College currently offers a wide range of employee training programs, all of which can be specifically tailored to meet the needs of any organization. Is your organization aware that the following training opportunities are currently available through the College? (Please circle "yes" or "no" for each. If your organization would like more information about any of these programs, please check the "more information" box.)

			More Information
Management skills training (leadership, conflict management, time management, team building)	yes	no	☐
Communications skills training (writing skills, presentation skills, interpersonal communication)	yes	no	☐
Technical skills training (accounting and finance, engineering, computer science)	yes	no	☐
Human resources training (group dynamics, employee motivation)	yes	no	☐
Entry-level skills training (account clerk, clerical, retail sales, data entry, food services)	yes	no	☐

17. Does your organization currently have any employee training needs that are *not* being met? (Please check one box.)

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

If "yes," please identify the positions for which training is needed. (Be as specific as possible.)

Position

Training Needed
(Management, Communications, Technical,
Human Resources, Entry-Level)

18. Would your organization be interested in having Mercer County Community College design and offer training programs to meet your particular employee training needs? (Please check one box.)

- ☐ no
☐ yes

If "yes," what kinds of training programs would be of interest to your organization? (Please check as many as apply.)

- ☐ Management skills training
☐ Communications skills training
☐ Technical skills training
☐ Human resources training
☐ Entry-level skills training
☐ Other (Please specify)

YOUR TURN

19. If you have any other comments, ideas, suggestions, or requests concerning the relationship between your organization and Mercer County Community College, please take this opportunity to express them. The College will make every effort to follow up on your input in appropriate ways.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope provided.

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 1

<u>COLUMN(S)</u>	<u>(SURVEY ITEM)</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1 - 14		Respondent Identification	
1 - 4		Alpha; 1st 4 letters of company name	
5 - 8		Numeric; SIC code (n n n n)	
9 - 11	If unknown enter 7	Numeric; Number of employees (n n n; right-adjusted)	
12 - 14	alpha chars	Numeric; Zip code, last 3 digits only	
15	(5)	Respondent's position in organization	
		1 = Pres., V. Pres	
		2 = Manager, Assistant Manager	
		3 = Personnel, Training Dir.	
		4 = Public Relats. Dir.	
		5 = Admin. Ass't	
		6 = Other	
		0 = No response	

APPENDIX B:
CODING FORMATS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 1

<u>COLUMN(S)</u>	<u>(SURVEY ITEM)</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
16 = Rank 1 17 = Rank 2 18 = Rank 3	(6)	Professional-level employee candidates: three most important qualities 1 = Basic skills 2 = Occupat., tech skills 3 = Management skills 4 = Credentials 5 = Personal responsibility 6 = Personal appear., personality 7 = Willingness to work, learn 8 = Ability to get along with others 9 = Other 0 = No response	Responses are coded separately according to rank order of importance (1, 2, 3)
19 = Rank 1 20 = Rank 2 21 = Rank 3	(7)	Non-professional level employee candidates: three most important qualities 1 = Basic skills 2 = Occupat., tech skills 3 = Management skills 4 = Credentials 5 = Personal responsibility 6 = Personal appear., personality 7 = Willingness to work, learn 8 = Ability to get along with others 9 = Other 0 = No response	Responses are coded separately according to rank order of importance (1, 2, 3)

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 1

<u>COLUMN(S)</u>	<u>(SURVEY ITEM)</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
22--29	(8)	Recruitment sources used: 0 = not used; 1 = used Private employ. agencies (col. 22) Newspaper ads (col. 23) Professional publications (col. 24) MCCC plcmnt. service (col. 25) Other school plcmnt. office (col. 26) NJ state employ. service (col. 27) CETA (col. 28) Other (col. 29)	Code 0 or 1 in <u>each</u> column.
30	(9)	Difficult-to-fill entry-level positions 1 = no 2 = don't know 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*Item has open-ended response option (if "yes"...); to be coded on Card 2, Cols. _____
31	(10)	Additional job positions over next 5 years 1 = no 2 = don't know 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*Item has open-ended response option (if "yes"...); to be coded on Card 2, Cols. _____ (ref: <u>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</u>)
32	(11)	Eliminated job positions over next 5 years 1 = no 2 = don't know 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*Item has open-ended response option (if "yes"...); to be coded on Card 2, Cols. _____ (ref: <u>DOT</u>)
33	(12)	MCCC grads/students as employees 1 = no 2 = don't know 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*If "yes," code cols. 34--40; otherwise, skip to column 41

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 1

COLUMN(S)

(SURVEY ITEM)

INFORMATION

COMMENTS

34--40

(12 continued)

Ability of MCCC grads/students to meet organization's needs:

7 = yes; 8 = no; 9 = no response

Basic skills (col. 34)

Occup., tech skills (col. 35)

Management skills (col. 36)

Personal responsibility (col. 37)

Personal appear., prsnlty. (col. 38)

Ability to get along (col. 39)

Willingness to work & learn (col. 40)

Code 7, 8, or 9 in each column; item has open-ended response option ("comments") to be coded on Card 2, cols. _____

41

(13)

CETA-trained employees

1 = no

2 = don't know

3 = yes*

0 = no response

*If "yes," code cols. 42-47; otherwise, skip to col. 48.

42-47

(13 continued)

Ability of CETA-trained employees to meet organization's needs:

7 = yes; 8 = no; 9 = no response

Basic skills (col. 42)

Occup., tech. skills (col. 43)

Personal responsibility (col. 44)

Personal appear., prsnlty. (col. 45)

Ability to get along (col. 46)

Willingness to work, learn (col. 47)

Code 7, 8, or 9 in each column; item has open-ended response option ("Comments") to be coded on Card 2, cols. _____

EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 1

COLUMN(S)	(SURVEY ITEM)	INFORMATION	COMMENTS
48	(14)	Current training to upgrade skills 1 = no 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*If "yes," code cols. 49--56; otherwise, skip to col. 57
49-56	(14 continued)	Who conducts current training: 0 = not checked; 1 = checked Personnel mgr. (col. 49) Training director (col. 50) Dept. head (col. 51) MCCC (col. 52) CETA (col. 53) Professional assoc. (col. 54) Consultant (col. 55) Other agency (col. 56)	Code 0 or 1 in <u>each</u> column
57--61	(15)	Incentives offered for further training: 0 = not checked; 1 = checked None (col. 57) Release-time (col. 58) Tuition (col. 59) Promotion (col. 60) Other (col. 61)	Code 0 or 1 in <u>each</u> column

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 1

COLUMN(S)	(SURVEY ITEM)	INFORMATION	COMMENTS
62-71	(16)	Awareness of MCCC training programs, Requests for more info: Aware? 7 = yes; 8 = no; 9 = no response More info? 0 = not checked; 1 = checked Management skills (cols. 62, 63) Communications (cols. 64, 65) Technical (cols. 66, 67) Human resources (cols. 68, 69) Entry-level (cols. 70, 71)	Note: code 2 cols. for each response option
72	(17)	Training needs not being met 1 = no 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*Item has open-ended response option (If "yes,..."); to be coded on Card 2, cols. _____
73	(18)	Interest in training programs designed by MCCC: 1 = no 3 = yes* 0 = no response	*If "yes," code cols. 74--79; otherwise, skip to col. 80
74-79	(18 continued)	Type of training program wanted: 0 = not checked; 1 = checked Management (col. 74) Communications (col. 75) Technical (col. 76) Human resources (col. 77) Entry-level (col. 78) Other (col. 79)	Code 0 or 1 in each column
80	----	Card identification # 1 = Card 1	

-51-

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 2

<u>COLUMN(S)</u>	<u>(SURVEY ITEM)</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1 - 14		Respondent Identification	For details, see format for Card 1
15 - 26	(9)	Difficult to fill entry-level positions: job classification and reasons why difficult to fill Job Classif #1 (col. 15 - 17) Job Classif #2 (col. 19 - 21) Job Classif #3 (col. 23 - 25) Reason #1 (col. 18) Reason #2 (col. 22) Reason #3 (col. 26) 1 = lack of skill (basic skills, specific skills) 2 = lack of experience 3 = lack of supply, competition for limited supply 4 = financial restrictions (low wages) 5 = work schedule (shift work, night hours) 6 = employee characteristics (e.g., not reliable, not motivated, personality) 7 = no reason given	Enter 3-digit <u>DOT</u> codes for up to 3 positions
27 - 35	(10)	Additional job positions over next 5 years: job classifications Job Classif #1 (col. 27 - 29) Job Classif #2 (col. 30 - 32) Job Classif #3 (col. 33 - 35)	Enter 3-digit <u>DOT</u> codes for up to 3 positions

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 2

<u>COLUMN(S)</u>	<u>(SURVEY ITEM)</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
36 - 44	(11)	Eliminated job positions over next 5 years: job classifications Job Classif. #1 (col. 36 - 38) Job Classif. #2 (col. 39 - 41) Job Classif. #3 (col. 42 - 44)	Enter 3-digit DOT codes for up to 3 positions
45 - 46	(12)	MCCC students/grads as employees: comments affect (col 45) 9 = neutral or insufficient data 1 = favorable or positive 2 = unfavorable or negative 3 = mixed, positive and negative content (col 46) 9 = no specific content beyond affect 4 = suggestion re: program development, course offering, some action to be taken by MCCC 5 = comment re: specific characteristics of or quality of preparation received by MCCC students/grads 6 = history of contact with MCCC as employee source 7 = history of inability to use MCCC as employee source (e.g., unable to arrange interview, recruit students/grads)	two-digit code for affect, content (item cannot be coded "99")

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EMPLOYER NEEDS SURVEY
CODING FORMAT: CARD 2

<u>COLUMN(S)</u>	<u>(SURVEY ITEM)</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
47 - 48	(13)	CETA-trained employees: comments affect (col 47) 9 = neutral 1 = positive 2 = negative 3 = mixed content (col 48) 9 = no content beyond affect 4 = suggestion re: program development, action 5 = comment re: specific characteristics of or quality of preparation received by CETA-trained employees 6 = history of contact with CETA as employee source 7 = history of inability to use CETA as employee source	two-digit code for affect, content (item cannot be coded "99")
49 - 50	(19)	"Your turn..." affect (col 49) 9 = neutral 1 = positive 2 = negative 3 = mixed content (col 50) 9 = no specific content beyond affect 4 = suggestion re: action to be taken by MCCC, course offerings, program emphasis, etc. 5 = expression of interest in future involvement with MCCC (e.g., training, apprenticeship, recruitment) 6 = history of prior involvement with MCCC (e.g., training, apprenticeship, recruitment) 7 = comment re: specific employee characteristics (actual or desirable) 8 = request for information about MCCC, students, programs	two-digit code for affect, content (item cannot be coded "99")

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73

80

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always enter "2" to indicate second card

74

Appendices C and D have been deleted because they contained copyrighted material. Appendix C contained "Occupational Divisions from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles". Appendix D contained "Standard Industrial Classification Business Code Numbers".

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